Claims:

What is claimed is:

1.   A system for providing a graphical user interface environment on a user's screen of a computer system, comprising:

        a library of graphical elements, each graphical element of said library having particular display characteristics and being capable of being displayed independently of one another;

        a first configuration file, said configuration file containing function calls to a subset of graphical elements within said library of graphical elements, which when activated retrieves said set of graphical elements; and,

        a graphical user interface, said graphical user interface displays said set of retrieved graphical elements on the users screen.

2.   The system of claim 1 further comprising:

        a user login interface which accepts a set of user login variables and uses said login variables to log a user in to the system.

3.   The system of claim 2 wherein the system uses the set of user login variables, in combination with the first configuration file, to specify the set of graphical elements which are to be retrieved from the graphical element library.

4.   The system of claim 3 further comprising:

        a second configuration file, activated by selecting a particular graphical element from the graphical user interface, and which when

activated retrieves a second set of graphical elements from the graphical element library.

5.   The system of claim 1 wherein said first configuration file is a skin file.

6.   The system of claim 5 wherein said skin file is parsed by an interface engine at runtime, said interface engine in communication with said graphical element library, to produce the visual display.

7.   The system of claim 5 wherein the user's computer system uses a specialized agent process to initialize the user's machine with a default desktop or skin, and populate it with the graphical elements, windows and applications specified for that user.

8.   The system of claim 7 wherein the specialized agent process determines which skin file the configuration client uses to produce the graphical environment and its accompanying elements.

9.   A method of creating a graphical user environment in a computer system, comprising:

    parsing a first configuration file, said configuration file containing function calls to a subset of graphical elements within said library of graphical elements, each graphical element of said library having particular display characteristics and being capable of being displayed independently of one another;

    retrieving said set of graphical elements; and,

    displaying the graphical elements on the screen.

10.   The method of claim 9 further comprising:

accepting from the user a set of login variables.

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11.   The method of claim 10 further comprising:

using the set of user login variables, in combination with the first configuration file, to specify the set of graphical elements which are to be retrieved from the graphical element library.

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12.   The method of claim 11 further comprising:

parsing a second configuration file, activated by selecting a particular graphical element from the graphical user interface, and which when activated retrieves a second set of graphical elements from the graphical element library.

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13.   The method of claim 9 wherein said first configuration file is a skin file.

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14.   The method of claim 13 wherein said skin file is parsed by an interface engine at runtime, said interface engine in communication with said graphical element library, to produce the visual display.

15.   The method of claim 13 further comprising:

using a specialized agent process to initialize the user's machine with a default desktop or skin, and populate it with the graphical elements, windows and applications specified for that user.

5   16.   The method of claim 15 wherein the specialized agent process determines which skin file the configuration client uses to produce the graphical environment and its accompanying elements.